SERMONS FROM SHAKESPEARE

By FATHER L. J. VAUGHAN

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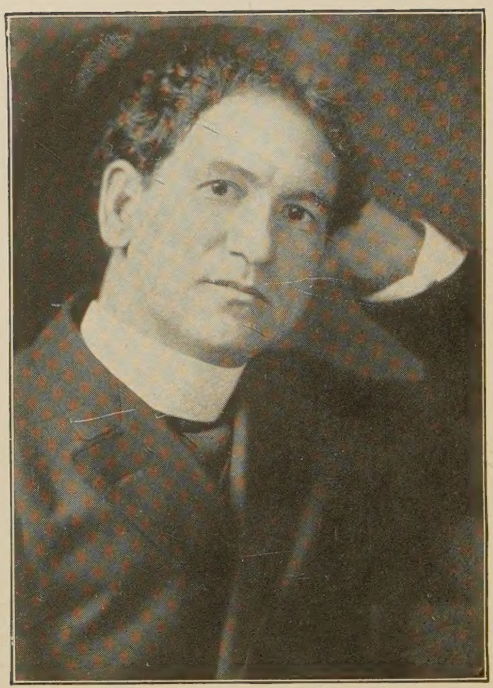

Yours Truly
J. J. Vaughan

COLLEGE OF THE HOLY NAMES
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Sermons from Shakespeare

By FATHER L. J. VAUGHAN

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Publisher's Note

We feel that we are to be congratulated in being at last able to answer the insistent demand of the students and instructors in literature, and give to the public Father Vaughan's "Sermons from Shakespeare" in book form.

We feel that few men, if any, have done so much to stimulate an interest in Shakespeare amongst the American public as Father Vaughan in his public lectures. Certainly no student of our times has excited more favorable comment for the originality of his treatment, and illuminating and simplifying of what has always appeared a most difficult study.

If we needed any proof of his value as an illuminating influence in the study of the Immortal Bard the greatest proof would be his wonderful success and rapid growth in popularity, which has made him, in the course of a few years, acquire an international reputation which has caused so great a demand for his lectures that he can no longer answer that demand in person. And so the requests for his lectures in printed form make us feel ourselves especially favored in being able to present his works to the public.

Preface

Since we are about to discuss the works of a great genius, it seems to me that in order to appreciate them at their proper value, and place them where they belong in the world of art, our first step should be to form some clear idea in our minds as to just what constitutes genius as applied to art.

To me genius is that indefinable sensitiveness of a great soul that causes the man of genius to see the spirit of the Creator in every created thing, and, embodying that spirit in his work, give to the work of his hand a soul. This is what makes the work of genius art. The great artist is therefore always a student of nature—a lover of God's great world. To him the universe is a living thing. He communes with nature as with a friend. The sighing trees, moaning and whispering as they bend their heads together, tell to his soul the mysteries of nature. The lightning flash and the thunder roll are the groans of the universe at outraged nature. The varied

flowers, nodding and bending as he passes by, read to his eye a story in colors. In this close communion with nature he learns many laws, unearths mysteries, finds a void in the heart of nature, and with the yearning of a genius, he longs to disclose to others the knowledge he has gained. Now, how may he do this? If he be a painter he paints a picture; if he be a poet he weaves a verse; if he be a musician he builds a theme. But the painting, the poem, the musical tones are neither his end nor his object. The material work is but the medium to convey a mighty thought—to teach a lasting lesson—genius is but laboring to put into imperishable form the vapory images of his soul.

The true work of art, then, is never a mere copy of nature—the reproduction of an existing thing. This would be but mimicry, requiring rather the animal propensity of the barbarian than the crucial judgment of cultured intelligence. No! Art does, if you will, mimic nature. Art does, if you insist, reproduce existing images; but it does more. It idealizes nature, it clarifies the material form, that looking beyond we may see the ideal. Nature presents for our consideration always the particular thing. Art never the particular, always the universal. Nature holds up for our study the person, the

individual. Art never the person, but always the type, the species, the genus.

Nature is an analysis, art is a synthesis.

It is necessary to keep this principle before us if we would understand the works of genius. And in no work will we find this more necessary than in the Immortal works of Shakespeare.

L. J. VAUGHAN.

Sermons from Shakespeare

It is with a sense of deep responsibility that I venture to speak to you on an educational subject. I say educational, because to me Shakespeare is a liberal education. For, after all, when we come to understand education properly, it means something more than a knowing of dates and facts and figures, something more than a memorizing of rules and formulas. Education, when you come to understand it truly, means taking the first steps out into God's great world; it is getting our bearings aright on the sea of life.

To me education is the lighting of a lamp, by which we may read aright the enigma of life; the unfolding of the human soul, whereby we may drink in the wonders and the mysteries and the laws and the beauties which the hand of God has painted all o'er the face of nature.

True education is to know something of the heart-aches, the death-pangs, the anxious seekings, the bitter disappointments and the soul's yearning of the human race, and so be able to attune our own hearts to be in harmony with God's great world around us.

And I know of few means that God has given us more powerful in arriving at that happy point

of education than the books which we read. Books! what a part they play in the life of the intelligent man! They influence our morals, they tinge our character, they stimulate our ambitions; they frame, and they color our whole life's great picture.

Have you not marked it, how the book of the boy becomes the guide of the youth, the companion of the man, the friend and consolation of old age? It is a grand thing when you are growing old, when the burdens of many years are bending down your shoulders, and the snows of many winters have whitened your hair, when you sit alone, and yet you are not alone—when you are surrounded by the ghosts of the mighty dead. And sitting in your library, leaning back in your chair, you may shake hands with the old friends of your childhood—the authors on the shelves. They never leave you; they stay with you when every other memory of a long and eventful life seems like the vapory figures of a dream that has long since passed.

It seems to me that the first great book was written by the hand of God—written in letters of light across the scroll of chaos. It was a wondrous book; it was God's book to man, the great book of nature, that wondrous world that was to unfold before us page by page and chap-

ter by chapter, wherein the hand of the Eternal God had written the laws and the lessons and the mysteries and the wonders and the beauties that would bind the human soul for ever to the great white throne of God.

And in order that man might read that book of nature, and reading it aright might find therein the mystery of his being, God gave to every man a wondrous mind—an almost divine intellect —that as that book of nature unfolds before him he might read aright the lessons that are written there.

But when man sinned—when man stood up twixt heaven and earth and hurled back in the face of the great Creator his pledge of love and immortality—in that instant the God-like mind was darkened. Sin heaped up and repeated through generation after generation, dwarfed the body, weakened the physical structure, and dragged man down to almost the level of brute-life. The God-like mind was still there, but all in a chaos of confusion. The splendid intellect was buried within, but could not manifest itself through this sin-abused and much debased body. Man was buried in material things, seeking his happiness in the world, and he could not reach to, nor grasp, nor read aright the supernatural

lessons that the hand of God had written all o'er that book of nature.

And for a little while it seemed as though God's work was lost. For a little while it seemed as though that book of nature had become a book of cipher that man would never read aright, a book of wonders that man could never understand.

But to a few gifted minds, to a few men of genius, God seems to have given the key to that wondrous book of nature, that as it unfolds before them page by page and chapter by chapter, with the light of genius given them by heaven, they may read aright the lessons that are written there, and put them into language that you and I can understand.

We call these great minds, we call these men of genius, authors. We love them, friends, and why? We love them most of all because they take up that great book of nature, that work of God, and turning o'er its pages they find the mysteries that are hidden there, and translate them into language that the sons and daughters of men can understand.

They lie out in the summer time under the beautiful green trees, they listen to the love songs of the birds, and in the love songs of the birds there is whispered to the soul of genius

something more than sweet music, something more than trembling tones. In the love songs of the birds there is whispered to the soul of genius something of the mysterious anthems that angels sing around the throne of God.

They lie down by the babbling brooks, they listen to the silvery waters rippling in soft music o'er the white pebbles as they march onward to their beds in the lakes. And in the murmur of the waters, in its rippling and its roar, there is something more than rushing water—it is the voice of Divinity whispering of the mysterious powers that the hand of the Creator has buried away down deep in the bosom of mother nature.

They pause—these men of gifted minds—pause o'er the tiny flowers that you and I would pass thoughtlessly by, and looking down into their soft, velvety petaled hearts the soul of genius sees something more than the pretty flowers, something more than the splendid shape, something more than the marvellous coloring: Out of the heart of the beautiful flower a soul steals forth that whispers to genius the mysteries of life and death.

Amongst such authors Shakespeare stands alone. He seems to occupy a unique position not only in the language and the literature of our own tongue, but, for that matter, in the

language and the literature of the world. He differs e'en from the greatest authors. Why, e'en the greatest authors, as I read them, study them, and analyze them attentively, I feel, indeed, with that mighty genius given them by Heaven, they have read that great book of nature as it unfolded before them, they have drunk in her wonders and her mysteries and her laws and her beauties, and then out of their own minds they want to imitate God. They would create—build up marvellous characters; wonderful indeed, but they are man-made. And when they have built up their little characters, into their mouths they put set phrases and analyzed sentences. Shakespeare differs from all this.

We can seldom say, truly, that Shakespeare creates. With a master hand he draws back the curtain from the stage of life and shows us men and women, not the creatures of his brain, but God's men and women—men and women as we know them in everyday life. He puts into their mouths no set phrases, no analyzed sentences, but coming down to the footlights, the men and women of Shakespeare speak forth their hearts and their souls to us.

E'en the greatest authors, as I read them I seem to feel, with their mighty genius, they have grasped the world of nature as it flew on before

them, that they have become so enraptured with a single page of the book of life, so lost in the study of a single human joy or a single human passion, that they spend their whole lives in translating one little page of God's great work, in giving expression to a single soul's joy or a single heart's yearning.

And so the danger to a man of one book, or of one author, is that he will judge God's whole world from the coloring of his favorite book, or from the standpoint of his favorite author.

These men of gifted minds delve down into the very bosom of mother earth; they filch forth the heart-drops of humanity; they crystalize them into beautiful literary gems, set them in wonderful settings, and send them forth for the admiration of the world.

Again, Shakespeare differs from all this. He never translates in part, he never delves down, nor digs, nor seems to seek for his material. With the genius of a master he holds the mirror up to nature and gives us a reflex, not of one page, not of a part, but of God's whole great scheme of existence—every human joy and every human passion from the cradle to the grave.

He is the one author that, as I read him, I feel, with a yearning of a genius he has thrown his arms out to the world, he has grasped the hand

of humanity, and he has counted the pulse of the human race. He is the one author who seems to have thrown himself prone on the bosom of mother nature and listened until he has caught the heart-throbs of humanity.

It is this very massiveness, this very completeness of Shakespeare, which has made his work even like the book of nature—a book of cipher—that men cannot read aright; a book of wonders that men study all their lives, and dying admit that they know little or nothing of the wonders or the mysteries or the beauties that are buried away in that matchless work.

It is this very massiveness—this very completeness of Shakespeare—which has caused the greatest critics in our language, after years of study, to conclude that, after all, the work is too gigantic, too complete for any one mind to have conceived, or any one hand to have finished in detail, but, after all, many minds and many hands were engaged upon the masterwork.

Why, even the lovers of Shakespeare are forced reluctantly to admit that at least two minds and two hands are evident in the structure of the work. And the question ever recurring is "why?" Why do you believe that you can distinguish the evidence of different minds

and different hands in the structure of the work? You will see clearly in a moment's consideration.

When Shakespeare speaks of the unknowable world, when he would inculcate a great moral principle, when he speaks of the supernatural he rises to the dignity of the sublime.

He is indeed, then, the divine poet. But, as every student of Shakespeare will remember, in the details of his work, in finishing scenes, and closing acts, and frequently in his comedy, he falls below the standard of the mere mediocre; and why? Because Shakespeare cared little or nothing for laws or words or technique.

And it is this very masterly disregard for law and usage that has caused him to incorporate into the very body of his matchless composition these glaring grammatical English mistakes, which, since his time, have become master-pieces of English expression.

We study the words of Shakespeare, and yet the words of Shakespeare were but the tools of his craft, which he used as he saw fit. Words were but the material with which he would build up a great temple of literary thought, and where the word did not fit he cut it off or elongated its meaning that it might fill in the space for which he designed it. Words were but vehicles to carry

his thoughts on down through the annals of time.

As he sat there and spun out the matchless music of his verse, verse was neither his end nor his object. As he sat there and spun out the matchless music of his verse he was merely weaving a garment with which he would clothe the child of his soul and send her forth for the admiration of men.

The truth is Shakespeare, with that wondrous genius given him by Heaven, has read the great book of nature as it unfolded before him. Like thousands of other authors he has drunk in her wonders and her beauties and her mysteries. But, then, from that book of nature he has turned to the written book of God—the inspired scripture—the scripture which is so evident in the structure of his work. It forms the very bone-work—the skeleton of his master-concepts—and he finds therein the same wonders, the same mysteries, the same heart-aches, the same death-pangs, the same soul yearnings of the human race that he finds all around him in God's great book of nature. And taking from that written book a text he sat down, not to write *mere* plays to while away the hours, not *mere* poems to satisfy a vulgar rabble, but to give to the world some of the greatest sermons ever conceived by

a human mind or executed by a merely human hand.

At first glance it may seem this is an odd view to take of Shakespeare. At first glance it may appear as a unique treatment of the Mighty Bard, but in order to appreciate the full motive and value of his work we must realize that it was written for people of the world—for men and women of mature minds and mature knowledge. Hence, the many delicate questions touched are not to be viewed as opening up forbidden grounds to immature minds, but rather assisting developed intellects to better understand the forces operating to make human life what it is. For unless you so study Shakespeare, unless you seek the ideal in his work, unless you judge him strictly from the standpoint of art, many of his compositions which have for years been accepted as master-pieces, when judged strictly from the standpoint of technique, will sink below the level of the mere mediocre. On the other hand many of his works that have been thrown aside by the critics as second rate productions, as mere bids to the vulgar rabble, studied in the light of art will be raised to the dignity of master-pieces.

If we would ever understand the true meaning, or properly appreciate the work of genius we

must be able to distinguish in literature, as indeed we do in all the other works of man, the difference between mere manufactory and real art. Let us just for a moment consider this point—manufactory. I care not in what department of man's work; I care not how beautifully it is done; I care not how wonderfully it is contrived; I care not how exquisitely executed, manufactory is always the work of the human hand. It caters to the present time, to the age and the place in which it is manufactured. It caters to the styles of the day and the fads of the hour, and it will be thrown aside or be forgotten as time rolls on and the styles change and the fads are forgotten. But art never dies; it is immortal. It belongs to no time, no place, or no people; it lives for ever, and why? Because art is a child of the human soul; it is an outcome of the human intellect. It caters to no time, no place, or no people. It is universal. It lives for ever because it embodies the grand ideals of the human soul. They will not die. They will live on for ever—as long as the human intellect yearns after or seeks divinity.

Would you then know the beauty of Shakespeare? Would you ever understand the inner meaning of his matchless verse you must study him as art. You must seek the presence of the

ideal in his work; you must find the soul, that underlying principle, that irresistible power that forced his genius to build up these literary structures, that he might send down into other hearts and other minds the grand ideals of his own soul.

However much knowledge, then, you may acquire by parsing or phrasing or tearing asunder; however much knowledge may come to you from your scientific analysis, if you would ever know the beauty of Shakespeare you must study him as art.

The great mistake of our English critics, and, for that matter, I might say the great mistake of our English readers in general, in the study of Shakespeare is this: you are so busy studying the *mere* technique, so enraptured with the material structure that you never delve down underneath and seek for the soul. The great trouble is that you are so lost in the music of his matchless verse, so enraptured with the *mere* material structure that you have never grasped the soul, never identified the immortal principle that rolls on from play to play and from poem to poem, identifying each great work, not merely as a work of art, but, as it were, giving to each great concept the stamp of a family resemblance, identifying each master-work as a child of that

divine genius, with the mighty Master as the Father of them all.

It seems to me that the great mistake of our English critics, again let me say it, the great mistake of our English readers in general in the study of literature is this: you insist upon using the method of a scientist in the study of an art. Now science, as we all know, pulls down, tears asunder in order that it may find the grain of truth or beauty that is buried within. But art differs from all this. Art builds up; art frames; art forms; art colors in order that truth and beauty may stand before us a living and lasting reality.

Without truth and beauty exemplified there is no real work of art. No hand of man has ever given birth to art. The hand is but the instrument that moulds into imperishable form the creations of the intelligent soul. To make this clear let us take, then, an example. Take for instance Julius Cæsar, the great tragedy of Roman life. Let us ask ourselves the question, "Is Julius Cæsar a work of art? Is it a master-piece?" Now, before we can answer this question intelligently we must call back to our minds what we understand when an intelligent man speaks of art. Art is that which elevates, which refines, is it not? Art is that which ap-

peals to the better elements in a man; art is that which stimulates the intellect; art is the sensible expression of the ideal.

Now, from this standpoint is Julius Caesar art? As it is studied in the schools today is Julius Caesar a master-piece? Is there anything in Julius Caesar that will elevate or refine? Is there anything in Julius Caesar that appeals to the better elements in a man? Is there anything in Julius Cæsar that stimulates the intellect? Where is the ideal? It is all blood and greed and avarice and hate. There is not a single ray of light from the opening to the closing of the play. The truth is if Julius Caesar were written today, without the name of the Immortal Bard before it, the play would not be admitted a work of art. Today, analyzed and parsed, judged strictly from the standpoint of English composition, Julius Caesar would be classed with such works as Hall Caine's Deemster. We would call it the child of a diseased brain, the outcome of a morbid imagination.

But, perhaps you will say, Julius Caesar is an historic drama, and we must expect the bloody atmosphere of that historic period. My dear people, this is the very thought in my own mind. But is Julius Caesar historic? Is the play of Julius Cæsar an historic play? If I were to

admit, with the average critic or reader of Shakespeare, that the play of Julius Caesar is intended as an historic picture of Rome, then I would feel myself forced to call Shakespeare a bungler in his craft. He has distorted time and place and incident. He has destroyed the historic character of Caesar, and for what? Would he teach us history by destroying and distorting what little we know of that historic period? The truth is the play of Julius Caesar will not stand the test of an historic analysis. There must be, then, lying beyond that splendid technique, hidden within these master-lines, there must be a central thought, a single motive which has escaped our readers and our critics in their historic analysis of the work.

It seems to me the whole secret lies in this: The work of Shakespeare is today universally admitted as literature. Well, if you admit that the work of Shakespeare is literature, I shall ask, "Is not literature an art?" It is the great art of arts. Then, why do you not study it as an art? Is it not strange that our English students today insist upon using one method in the study of literature and an entirely different method in the study of the other arts? Why do you not study literature as you study architecture, as you study sculpture, as you study painting? The author,

instead of using canvas or color and brush, uses words—living, vivified words—in order that he may impress upon your very soul the picture of his own mind. Now, if this picture, instead of being merely impressed upon your mind in words, were painted on canvas how would you study it now? Take, for example, a great artist who has just finished his master-piece, and he wishes to disclose it for your admiration or your condemnation. Will the great painter put the picture low down on the floor, so that each one may come up and study the technique, see every trick of his art, and the stroke of his brush, and the bunching of coloring, and the texture of the canvas? Oh, no! Any artist who would follow this method in disclosing his work to the world would never be recognized as a master, for having studied the picture in detail your mind would be blurred with the technique—you would never feel the spirit, the soul of the composition.

No, when a great artist has finished his masterpiece and he wishes to disclose it for the intelligent judgment of the world, he hangs the picture high on the wall, he cunningly shades the light, so that it strikes the central figure, and then he asks you to stand far back—not where you may study the picture in detail, but where the whole composition bursts upon you as a unit,

where the background throws out the central figure into bold relief, and there in the central figure you catch the ideal, the key to the whole mental picture. Now, as you stand there gazing upon the silent picture, out of the silent canvas you read the master-story. Just in like manner when you read a great play, a splendid poem, a mighty story you should be able to close your eyes and find impressed upon your soul a master-picture; and that picture within your soul, that is the very picture that was in the mind of genius that forced him to build up his literary structure that he might send that picture down into other hearts and other minds.

And therefore I feel that the first steps in the study of literature must be the study of the mental picture, instead of the analysis of the empty shell which has carried the picture down to us. When we understand the picture, when the soul of the composition has touched our own, then the analysis of the mere material structure will become a labor of love.

Now you have read your Shakespeare, you have analyzed, you have parsed and phrased. I beg of you to throw aside your scientific analysis, and let us for once study Shakespeare from the standpoint of art, as a mighty word painter of mental pictures.

Julius Caesar

Let us take first the great tragedy, Julius Caesar. The popular impression of this great acting play is that it was written and presented to the public as an historic drama. The truth or fallacy of this estimate of the play must be cleared up before we can thoroughly appreciate its beauty or its true meaning.

I believe all doubt as to the intention of the author may be cleared up in regard to this play, and, for that matter, in regard to any other well constructed drama, by adhering closely to the old classical laws of dramatic construction.

A play, like any other work of art, cannot be constructed at haphazard. The material form must preserve the unity, the conciseness or the clearness of the mental impression, otherwise the mental picture will be lost in a labyrinth of the material. Therefore, in the writing of a drama five acts are considered necessary to harmoniously work out the theme. Shakespeare has carefully adhered to this classical law, and in order that the five acts may be properly balanced each act has its function in unfolding the story of the play.

The function of the first act is the presentation

of the theme, and the introduction of the heart-interest, as no drama can be called a work of art unless it has a defined theme and appeals to the heart as well as to the intellect. This accomplished, the first act should close.

The function of the second act is the introducing of the dramatic incident—that is, the presenting of a conflict between two principles, good and evil. This is what makes the composition a drama. This dramatic incident thoroughly established, the second act should close.

The function of the third act should be the development or working out of this dramatic conflict. And it is in the third act that the most liberty is given to the author.

The fourth act brings the climax or dramatic action—the poetic retribution.

And the fifth act is merely the denouement, or equalization, restoring the picture to the harmony of the first act.

With these laws it becomes clear to any mind that if Julius Caesar were intended by the author to be an historic work we must find the historic theme in the first act, for the function of the first act is the unfolding of the theme and the introduction of the heart-interest. But we seek in vain in the first act of Julius Caesar for an historic incident. We find a picture of discon-

tent. We find jealousy and hatred and distraction in unexpected places. We find the superstitions of paganism brought forth most vividly. We find the feast of the Lupercal as a reflection of pagan Rome. We find the heart-interest in the love of Caesar's wife, and in spite of ourselves we become interested in Caesar—this puny, infirm god of the Romans.

It is evident, then, that since no historic incident is enunciated in the first act, that Shakespeare did not intend an historic treatment of the play. Had the assassination of Caesar been introduced in the first act, then, indeed, we could no longer question the intention of the author to produce an historic picture, for he would be obliged in the four following acts to develop the historic theme which he presented for our consideration in the first act.

I am sure, therefore, that we will be able to catch the true meaning of Shakespeare more quickly, and more clearly, if we study the play as a great word painting. In order to do this we must construct our picture. Take first the background. But where will we find the background? If you were painting this picture of Julius Caesar where would you find the background? My dear friends, you will always find the background of a literary picture in the open-

ing scenes of a play or in the opening chapters of a book. What I call the background of a picture is, after all, simply what you call the atmosphere of a literary composition. The author must create his atmosphere before he can introduce the characters who are to live in that atmosphere. Hence, the background of the picture of Julius Caesar rolls out before us like a great panorama in the opening scenes of the play. It is Rome, pagan Rome; Rome the mistress of the world, with all the arts, and all the sciences, and all the wealth, and all the culture of the world concentrated to and centered in Rome; and Rome is rolling in her luxury and power. Every nation is lying at her feet; every peoples pay her tribute. The imperial foot of Rome is on the neck of the civilized world. And imperial Rome in an hour of pride and of greed stoops down into the gutter, picks up a little man of clay—one of her own sons—raises him up, puts him on a pedestal, drapes him with the imperial purple, and Caesar is a god; and Rome, that demands the homage of the world, bows down before this little god of clay. They put his statues in the public squares; the statues are draped with the national colors; the laurel wreath is placed upon his brow; women and children shower down flowers and perfume as the divine Caesar passes

by. They strew their garments in the dust that the imperial Caesar may tread upon them. Caesar is a god, and Rome, that demands the homage of the world, bows down before the little god that she herself has made. See! he stands in the very center of the picture; he dominates every line in the play. Out of his own mouth you get the key to the whole picture. He says:

"I could be well moved, if I were as you;
If I could pray to move, prayers would move me:
But I am constant as the northern star,
Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament.
The skies are painted with unnumber'd sparks;
They are all fire and every one doth shine;
But there's but one in all doth hold his place:
So in the world; 'tis furnish'd well with men,
And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive;
Yet in the number I do know but one
That unassailable holds on his rank,
Unshaked of motion: and that I am he,
Let me a little show it, even in this;
That I was constant Cimber should be banish'd,
And constant do remain to keep him so."

No sooner have you heard this blasphemy from the mouth of this little shivering man of clay saying he is a god—he is like the northern

star, immovable—than the very hand that has made him a god reaches up and catches the hem of his garment, and drags him down. There's your pagan god, a handful of bleeding clay, and around him stand the foremost men of Rome—the very men who yesterday swore by the divine name of imperial Caesar—there they stand today with their bloody hands and their dripping daggers. And as they stand—see! the motive of the play unfolds! There enters the slave of Antony—Antony who hung upon the neck of this Roman god—Antony who was more to Caesar than a son or a brother. But no sooner has this fickle pagan world dragged down her god than Antony sends his slave. Is it for revenge? No; to beg, to cringe, to plead that he may have a part in the new world, that he may come on the stage in the new drama of life, and with his cap and bells play the fool to the new god—to the new god this pagan world may rear up—and it is only when he is assured of his own personal safety; it is only when he knows that his own miserable body is freed from the hand of the assassin, that Antony dares to come out from his own home. Yesterday he was master, today he must rush through the streets of Rome to save himself from bodily harm. And as he rushes along, at the very door of the senate

house he is stopped by the bleeding body of Caesar, the god. Oh! it is no set phrases, no analyzed sentences; but spontaneously bubbling forth from the bursting heart of Antony comes that splendid sermon on the vanity of a world without a God.

"O mighty Caesar! dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well.
(And he leaves the dead to seek the living)
I know not, gentlemen, what you intend,
Who else must be let blood, who else is rank:
If I myself, there is no hour so fit
As Caesar's death hour, nor no instrument
Of half that worth as those your swords, made rich
With the most noble blood of all this world.
I do beseech ye, if you bear me hard,
Now, whilst your purpled hands do reek and smoke,
Fulfil your pleasure. Live a thousand years,
I shall not find myself so apt to die:
No place will please me so, no mean of death,
As here by Caesar, and by you cut off,
The choice and master spirits of this age."

Then Brutus speaks:

"O Antony, beg not your death of us.
Though now we must appear bloody and cruel,

As, by our hands and this our present act,
You see we do; yet see you but our hands
And this the bleeding business they have done:
Our hearts you see not; they are pitiful;
And pity to the general wrong of Rome—
As fire drives out fire, so pity pity,—
Hath done this deed on Caesar." (Antony easily appeased, answers)
"..... I doubt not of your wisdom.
Let each man render me his bloody hand:
First, Marcus Brutus, will I shake with you;
Next, Caius Cassius, do I take your hand;
Now, Decius Brutus, yours; now yours, Metellus;
Yours, Cinna, and, my valiant Casca, yours;
Though last, not least in love, yours, good Trebonius.
Gentlemen all,—alas, what shall I say?
My credit now stands on such slippery ground,
That one of two bad ways you must conceit me,
Either a coward or a flatterer. (Seeing the upturned face of Caesar his better nature overcomes him)
That I did love thee, Caesar, O, 'tis true:
If then thy spirit look upon us now,
Shall it not grieve thee dearer than thy death,
To see thy Antony making his peace,
Shaking the bloody fingers of thy foes,

Most noble! in the presence of thy corpse?
Had I as many eyes as thou hast wounds,
Weeping as fast as they stream forth thy blood,
It would become me better than to close
In terms of friendship with thine enemies.
Pardon me, Julius! Here wast thou bay'd brave hart;
Here didst thou fall, and here thy hunters stand,
Sign'd in thy spoil and crimson'd in thy lethe.
O world, thou wast the forest to this hart;
And this, indeed, O world, the heart of thee.
How like a deer striken by many princes
Does thou here lie!".....

(But self conquers, and again the politician speaks)

"Pardon me, Caius Cassius:
The enemies of Caesar shall say this;
Then, in a friend, it is cold modesty."

(Then Cassius speaks)

"I blame you not for praising Caesar so;
But what compact mean you to have with us?
Will you be prick'd in number of our friends,
Or shall we on, and not depend on you?"

(Antony speaks)

"Therefore I took your hands, but was indeed
Sway'd from the point by looking down on Caesar.
Friends am I with you all and love you all,

Upon this hope that you shall give me reasons
Why and wherein Caesar was dangerous."

(And then alone with Caesar)

"O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of times.
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!
Over thy wounds now do I prophesy,
Which like dumb mouths do ope their ruby lips
To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue,
A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
Shall cumber all the part of Italy;
Blood and destruction shall be so in use,
And dreadful objects so familiar,
That mothers shall but smile when they behold
Their infants quarter'd with the hands of war;
All pity choked with custom of fell deeds:
And Caesar's spirit ranging for revenge,
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
Cry 'Havoc,' and let slip the dogs of war;
That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
With carrion men, groaning for burial."

This is your picture. It is not the literary structure; it is the dramatic picture of blood and greed and avarice and hate. Caesar is a god, and

they drag him down. Brutus makes his own moral law. Antony justifies his own ends. There is no law; there is no morality; there is no God. Each man strives and grasps for his own. It is the picture of a world without a God.

Now we see why Shakespeare has painted a puny, egotistical fatalist, tinged with all the superstitions of paganism, instead of the mighty Caesar of history. Caesar is presented to us, not as the mere historic personage, but as paganism personified, and he falls in ruin, leaving desolation on all sides.

This idea of Shakespeare seems to be carried out in the four great characters of the play. He presents to us in no instance the historic personages known by their respective names used in the play. We have four characters upon which the play moves—Caesar, Cassius, Brutus and Antony; and Shakespeare has carefully drawn, in these four characters, four types of paganism as clearly and as distinctly as it is possible to embody a type in an individual. He has given us the four great ages of Rome in his four great characters. Cassius is the Roman barbarian; honest, sincere, self-reliant, with the spirit of battle and war. He worships physical power and physical strength; he sneers at Caesar because of his infirm body and his puny constitu-

tion; he glories in his own physical strength and superiority as a soldier. His is the spirit of the Roman barbarians who conquered the world. This is clearly exemplified in his one great speech:

"I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus,
As well as I do know your outward favour.
Well, honour is the subject of my story.
I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life, but, for my single self,
I had as lief not be as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.
I was born free as Caesar; so were you:
We both have fed as well, and we can both
Endure the winter's cold as well as he:
For once, upon a raw and gusty day,
The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,
Caesar said to me 'Darest thou, Cassius, now
Leap in with me into this angry flood,
And swim to yonder point?' Upon the word,
Accoutred as I was, I plunged in
And bade him follow: so indeed he did.
The torrent roar'd, and we did buffet it
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
And stemming it with hearts of controversy;
But ere we could arrive the point proposed,
Caesar cried, 'Help me, Cassius, or I sink!'
I, as Aeneas our great ancestor

Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber
Did I the tired Caesar: and this man
Is now become a god, and Cassius is
A wretched creature, and must bend his body
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.
He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake: 'tis true, this god did shake;
His coward lips did from their colour fly,
And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world
Did lose his lustre: I did hear him groan:
Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him and write his speeches in their books,
Alas, it cried, 'Give me some drink, Titinius,'
As a sick girl. Ye gods! it doth amaze me
A man of such feeble temper should
So get the start of the majestic world
And bear the palm alone" .....
"Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.

Men at some time are masters of their fates:
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.
Brutus, and Caesar: what should be in that Caesar?
Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
Write them together, yours is as fair a name;
Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;
Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em,
Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Caesar.
Now, in the names of all the gods at once,
Upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed,
That he is grown so great? Age, thou art shamed!
Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!
When went there by an age, since the great flood,
But it was famed with more than with one man?
When could they say till now that talk'd of Rome
That her wide walls encompass'd but one man?
Now is it Rome indeed, and room enough,
When there is in it but one only man.
O, you and I have heard our fathers say

There was a Brutus once that would have
brook'd
The eternal devil to keep his state in Rome
As easily as a king."

He is the one honest character in the play. He is jealous of Caesar; he admits it in his own mind, but justifies his jealousy in his own fitness and Caesar's physical inferiority. He says:

"Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet, I see,
Thy honourable metal may be wrought
From that it is disposed: Therefore, it is meet
That noble minds keep ever with their likes;
For who so firm that cannot be seduced?
Caesar doth bear me hard; but he loves Brutus:
If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,
He should not humour me. I will this night,
In several hands, in at his windows throw,
As if they came from several citizens,
Writings, all tending to the great opinion
That Rome holds of his name, wherein
obscurely
Caesar's ambition shall be glanced at:
And after this let Caesar seat him sure;
For we will shake him, or worse days endure."

Cassius is the barbarian. He uses craft, but knows it, and is honest with himself. Brutus is the Greco-Roman, who has borrowed the philosophy and the literature of Greece; the Roman

satiated with conquests, and with the Greek philosophy and eastern training, feels himself a superior sort of creature. Like the sophistry of his philosophy, he is false to the core, not even honest with himself. With his false philosophy he would drug his own soul into peaceful slumber.

Had Shakespeare devoted an entire play to the development of the character of Brutus alone he could not have more strongly accentuated the falseness of the man, the danger of a character nourished and upheld by false philosophy, than he has disclosed in the one soliloquy, where Brutus, speaking to his own soul, judges his dearest friend.

"It must be by his death: and, for my part,
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. He would be crown'd:
How that might change his nature, there's the question:
(It is not the fact, but the speculative question that he would judge)
It is the bright day that brings forth the adder;
And that craves wary walking. Crown him? —that;—
And then, I grant, we put a sting in him,
That at his will he may do danger with.

The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
Remorse from power: and, to speak truth of Caesar,
I have not known when his affections sway'd
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof,
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend: So Caesar may; (So might any man; even the honourable Brutus)
Then, lest he may, prevent. And, since the quarrel
Will bear no colour for the thing he is,
Fashion it thus; that what he is, augmented,
Would run to these and these extremities:
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
Which hatch'd would as his kind grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell."

In all the literature of the English tongue, I doubt that such another hellish bit of reasoning can be found. Were you to try your own mother by this method of reasoning you must make her an unnamable thing.

Perhaps the most artistic touch which Shakes-

peare has given in this drama, is where he makes this Brutus,—the man of literature, the scholar—open his sentence with relative pronoun "it" without an antecedent. "It must be by his death." What is this "it"? Brutus dares not mention, even to his own soul, the antecedent of that "it." "It must be by his death." Brutus, the noble Brutus, shrinks from putting into words the thought that is uppermost in his mind. We must supply the sentence which Brutus will not speak. "It must be." What is the advancement of Brutus—the ambition of Brutus—can be only by the death of Caesar. This character of Brutus is carried out in his speech to the Romans:

"Be patient till the last."

"Romans, countrymen, and lovers! hear me for my cause, and be silent, that you may hear: believe me for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe: censure me in your wisdom, and awake your senses, that you may the better judge. If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say that Brutus' love to Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all freemen? As Caesar loved me, I weep

for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him; but as he was ambitious, I slew him. There are tears for his love; joy for his fortune; honour for his valour; and death for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a bondsman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak; for him have I offended. I pause for a reply."

"None, Brutus, none."

"Then none have I offended. I have done no more to Caesar than you shall do to Brutus. The question of his death is enrolled in the Capitol; his glory not extenuated, wherein he was worthy, nor his offenses enforced, for which he suffered death. Here comes his body, mourned by Mark Antony; who, though he had no hand in his death, shall receive the benefit of his dying, a place in the commonwealth; as which of you shall not? With this I depart,—— That, as I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself, when it shall please my country to need my death."

Carefully framed and balanced, cold as a block of marble, chiseled with the care of a consummate master, he holds up to the Romans, not

their wrongs, not Caesar's faults, but the honour, the righteousness of Brutus. He is, in my mind, the villain of the play; the scoundrel who would justify all his actions on his assumed virtue. He is the same character which runs through every age of history, which has been so conspicuous in the christian church; the character who has deluged the world with blood for the honour of a merciful, loving God.

It is worthy of marked attention that Shakespeare has, in Brutus and Cassius, shown us the danger of dreamers meddling in public affairs; the danger in men of practical experience allying themselves with, or allowing themselves to be governed by theorists. In every incident of the play where there is a question of conflict of opinion Cassius is right, Brutus is wrong, and, still, in every instance Cassius gives way to the theorizing of Brutus.

Perhaps the strongest argument for the fallacy of Brutus is in the fact that the spirit of Caesar haunts him. Twice he sees, or fancies he sees, the ghost of Caesar. No one else sees the spirit; it is only a figment of the guilty mind of Brutus; it is his conscience crying out against his intellect. Again, the last words he utters are a confession of his guilt: "Caesar now be still; I killed not thee with half so good a will." As

if even then in the hour of his death, the spirit of Caesar mocked him.

Caesar is the triumphant Roman, the ruler of the world, the fatalist that feels himself deified; while Antony is the modern Roman, the diplomat, the Italian that turns all things to his own purpose. If he were living today he would be a great politician, a mighty political boss. His speech to the Romans is perhaps the best example of diplomatic oratory which we can find in the language. His hatred for Brutus, his grief for Caesar, his fidelity to Octavius, never, for one instant, makes him forget the interests of Antony. I believe in no part of Shakespeare has the actor so sinned against the spirit of Shakespeare as in the reading of this speech of Antony.

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. (A first bid for the favor of the rabble)
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it. (Veiled accusation of Brutus.)

Here under leave of Brutus and the rest,—
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men.— (More play to the rabble.)
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man. (Now he has gained the attention of his hearers, and before they realize it he presents the case of Caesar.)
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff: (But he must not yet offend the Brutus swayed mob. Hence)
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man. (Now for the clinching of Caesar's case.)
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man. (No

longer veiled, but open scorn)
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. (He has the mob now, and will play upon them. Tears and pathos are his instruments)
Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me."....
.....(Low and pleading now, like a mother to her child)
"But yesterday the word of Caesar might
Have stood against the world; now lies he there,
And none so poor to do him reverence.
O masters, if I were disposed to stir
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
I should do Brutus wrong and Cassius wrong
Who, you all know, are honourable men.
(Deep, hissing scorn)
I will not do them wrong; I rather choose
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,
Than to wrong such honourable men. (Flung at the crowd as a reproach)

But here's a parchment with the seal of Caesar;
I found it in his closet; 'tis his will:
Let but the commons hear this testament—
Which pardon, me, I do not mean to read—
(Isn't this cleverly timed; just to the impulse of the crowd? Of course he will read it. 'Tis for that he is here)
And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds
And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,
Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,
And, dying, mention it within their wills,
Bequeathing it as a rich legacy
Unto their issue." .....(He must still further work them to curiosity.)
"Have patience, gentle friends, I must not read it;
It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you.
You are not wood, you are not stones, but men;
And, being men, hearing the will of Caesar,
It will inflame you, it will make you mad:
'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs,
(Apparently by accident, but most cleverly by design)
For if you should, O, what would come of it!"
.....
"Will you be patient? Will you stay awhile?

I have o'ershot myself to tell you of it;
I fear I wrong the honourable men
Whose daggers have stabb'd Caesar; I do fear it." ..... (Now the crowd goes mad, and Antony is the wild fanatical orator.)
"You will compel me then to read the will?
Then make a ring about the corpse of Caesar,
And let me show you him that made the will.
Shall I descend? and will you give me leave?"
....."If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this mantle: I remember
The first time ever Caesar put it on,
'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
The day he overcame the Nervii:
Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
See what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it,
As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
If Brutus, so unkindly knock'd, or no:
For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel:
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him.
This was the most unkindest cut of all;
For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,

Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquished him: then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statue,
Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.
O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourish'd over us.
O, now you weep, and I perceive you feel
The dint of pity: these are gracious drops.
Kind souls, what weep you when you but behold
Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors." ..... "Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up
To such a sudden flood of mutiny.
They that have done this deed are honourable;
What private griefs they have, alas, I know not,
That made them do it: They are wise and honourable,
And will, no doubt, with reasons answer you.
I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts:
I am no orator, as Brutus is;

But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man,
That loved my friend; and that they know full well
That gave me public leave to speak of him:
For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,
To stir men's blood: I only speak right on;
I tell you that which you yourselves do know;
Show your sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
And bid them speak for me; but were I Brutus,
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue
In every wound of Caesar, that should move
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny."....
......"Why, friends, you go to do you know not what:
Wherein hath Caesar thus deserved your loves?
Alas, you know not; I must tell you then:
You have forgot the will I told you of."....
....."Here is the will, and under Caesar's seal.
To every Roman citizen he gives,
To every several man, seventy-five drachmas." ....."Moreover, he hath left you all his walks,

His private arbours, and new-planted orchards,
On this side Tiber; he hath left them you,
And to your heirs forever; common pleasures,
To walk abroad and recreate yourselves.
Here was a Caesar! when comes such another?".....“Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot,
Take thou what course thou wilt.”

The average actor insists upon reading this speech with much the same elegance and polish with which Brutus has delivered his oration, utterly forgetful of the fact that Antony was not an orator, that he was merely one of the young satellites revolving around the mighty Caesar. They bring into it little of the craftiness, little of the trickery, with which he throws to the people thoughts which they would not permit him to utter if spoken out in a straight-forward, manly fashion. Indeed, I believe that Shakespeare, with his love of dramatic contrast, has purposely put these two speeches so closely together that one may be a perfect offset for the other. Brutus' speech well prepared, elegantly balanced, a perfect specimen of Roman oratory. Antony's an almost extempore talk, working upon the passions of the people as they are manifested before his very eyes. This seems evident from his words to the slave of Octavius Caesar:

"Post back with speed, and tell him what hath
chanced:
Here is a mourning Rome, a dangerous Rome,
No Rome of safety for Octavius yet;
Hie, hence, and tell him so. Yet stay awhile;
Thou shalt not back till I have borne this corse
Into the market-place there shall I try,
In my oration, how the people take
The cruel issue of these bloody men;
According to the which, thou shalt discourse
To young Octavius of the state of things.
Lend me your hand."

Had the crowd sided with Brutus, Antony would have followed Brutus as readily as he fought against him; but seeing his own interests furthered by the people, he used the body of Caesar, and the honour of Brutus, as a stepping-stone to the throne.

It is a wondrous picture of a mighty world without a God.

Shakespeare has given us four examples of men; each one mighty in his way, but no one of the four able to rise above himself. They were products of paganism; their gods were men. No man can rise higher than his ideal. The ideal of pagan Rome was a man-made god. Each man made his own little god—an image of himself, and in his god judged himself.

So Cassius sneered at all that was not physically perfect, and material power; Antony, swayed by his own selfish desires; Brutus, a victim of his false philosophy and intellectual pride —it is a picture of a world without God.

Henry Eighth

Masterly as is his word picture of a world without a God, had Shakespeare stopped there I would not be ready to argue him the great genius of our language. Any other great author that I know of, if he had once caught the spirit of paganism, would have gone on multiplying picture after picture, and copy after copy, until his whole life's work would reek with the blood and the greed and the perfidy and the avarice of Rome. But herein does Shakespeare show his master-hand. He has grasped the spirit of paganism; he has painted his picture of pagan life, and with the yearning of a genius he turns the canvas, and begins to paint anew—a new picture, a new world—and yet—no! as you look closer, it is the same old world, but O! how different. Years, centuries seem to have trembled o'er that world of vice. The golden sunlight of christianity has mounted up into the bosom of the heavens, throwing out her jeweled arms in benediction o'er the world, and in spite of the greed and the avarice and the grossness and the perfidy of men, the whole picture scintillates with the spirit of Christ.

I find this companion picture of Julius Caesar

in Henry VIII. To my mind neither one nor the other can be accepted as historic. They were intended as two ideal pictures. Julius Caesar is the world—dark, vain, bloody, empty—a picture of the world without a God.

Henry VIII., the same world, the same greed, the same avarice, but God is in the picture. Just for a moment study them together. Take first the background of the picture of Henry VIII. It is the same background you found in Julius Caesar—a world of hate, a world of greed, a world of war and contention, a world just peeping out of the barbarism that has swept down over Europe. And this vain and fickle world in an hour of pride, and of greed, stoops down into the gutter, picks up a little shivering man of clay—one of her own sons—raises him up, puts him on a pedestal, drapes him with the imperial purple, and Wolsey is a god, more powerful than the king, rich beyond computation, the king-maker of his day. He rules his little world a god. But see! in an hour of pride and of lust the very hand that made him a god, reaches up, and catches the hem of his garment, and drags him down, and there is your little god lying in the dust.

It is the same picture as Julius Caesar; the same picture, but O! how different. Not an out-

cry for revenge, not a thirsting for blood, not a sentence of hatred: Grander now in the hour of his degradation than in all his princely elegance is Wolsey, when his conscience finds his God:

"So farewell to the little good you bear me.
Farewell! a long farewell, to all my greatness!
This is the state of man: today he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes; tomorrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a riping, nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do. I have ventured,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory,
But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride
At length broke under me, and now has left me,
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream that must forever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye:
I feel my heart new open'd. O, how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favors!
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have:
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again.

Why, how now, Cromwell!" . . .
. . . "What, amazed
At my misfortunes? Can thy spirit wonder
A great man should decline? Nay, and you weep,
I am fall'n indeed." . . .
. . . Why, well;
Never so truly happy, my good Cromwell.
I know myself now; and I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities,
A still and quiet conscience. The king has cured me,
I humbly thank his grace; and from these shoulders,
These ruin'd pillars, out of pity, taken
A load would sink a navy, too much honour.
O, 'tis a burden, Cromwell, 'tis a burden
Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven!"
. . . "I hope I have: I am able now, methinks,
Out of a fortitude of soul I feel,
To endure more miseries and greater far
Than my weak-hearted enemies dare offer.
What news abroad?" . . .
. . . "God bless him!"
. . . "That's somewhat sudden:
But he's a learned man. May he continue
Long in his highness' favour, and do justice

For truth's sake and his conscience; that his bones,
When he has run his course and sleeps in blessings,
May have a tomb of orphans' tears wept on 'em!
What more?" . . .
. . . "That's new indeed." . . .
. . . "There was the weight that pull'd me down. O Cromwell,
The king has gone beyond me: all my glories
In that one woman I have lost forever:
No sun shall ever usher forth mine honours,
Or gild again the noble troops that waited
Upon my smiles. Go, get thee from me, Cromwell;
I am a poor fall'n man, unworthy now
To be thy lord and master: seek the king;
That sun, I pray, may never set! I have told him
What and how true thou art: he will advance thee;
Some little memory of me will stir him—
I know his noble nature—not to let
Thy hopeful service perish too: good Cromwell,
Neglect him not; make use now, and provide
For thine own future safety."
. . . "Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear

In all my miseries; but thou hast forced me,
Out of thy honest truth, to play the woman.
Let's dry our eyes: and thus far hear me, Cromwell;
And, when I am forgotten, as I shall be,
And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention
Of me more must be heard of, say I taught thee;
Say, Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory,
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honor,
Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in;
A sure and safe one, though thy master miss'd it.
Mark but my fall and that that ruin'd me.
Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition;
By that sin fell the angels; how can man then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by it?
Love thyself last: cherish those hearts that hate thee;
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,
To silence envious tongues. Be just and fear not:
Let all the ends thou aim's at be thy country's,
Thy God's, and truth's; then if thou fall'st, O, Cromwell,

Thou fall'st a blessed martyr! Serve the king;
And prithee, lead me in:
There take an inventory of all I have,
To the last penny; 'tis the king's: my robe,
And my integrity to heaven, is all
I dare now call mine own. O, Cromwell,
Cromwell!
Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, He would not in mine age
Left me naked to mine enemies."

There is your picture; the same picture as Julius Caesar, but what a different spirit. In spite of the greed, and the avarice, and the lust of men, the whole picture scintillates with the spirit of Christ. Grander now, in the hour of his helplessness, is Wolsey when his soul turns back to his God.

Friends, this is the genius of Shakespeare; this is the immortal spirit that cannot die. It is not his splendid lines that make him the master; it is not his matchless verse that makes him live; it is the soul's ambitions, the heart's yearnings, the highest ideals painted by his master-hand. Right here you may, if you wish, catch the genius of Shakespeare—in Wolsey, in Katherine, in Henry, in Caesar, and the Romans. Other authors really create;

they build up marvelous characters; men and women of clay. Shakespeare creates nothing. He takes your breast, or my heart, and tearing them open shows a soul—a living soul—trembling under the eyes of God.

Shakespeare's Woman

To me the great world of Shakespeare is like a mighty garden—a wonderful garden of the human soul—where numberless flowers of thought bloom in profusion. In the little time that you and I may walk together we could not pause for an instant o'er each of the many flowers of thought blooming in this garden of the mind. At most we can, as it were, but rush through the pathways and the byways of that garden of thought, and inhale en masse the fragrance of the flowers. But there is one flower growing in that garden of thought that I would not have you pass unnoticed by—a tall and stately lily, trembling on the stem—Shakespeare's woman. Woman! I often wonder do we half realize the real meaning of the word. Is there anything in the world that has made man better, that has pushed on progress, that has made us men what we are, that we do not owe to woman.

I care not how great man may become through power; I care not how low he may sink in his weakness; I care not what honors the world may have showered upon him, there is one word in our language that makes us

all akin—that word is mother. Mother! In all the glory of honors and riches, in all the plaudits that the world gives to fame, if each and every man that has known greatness were to open his heart, and speak the truth, he would tell you that when the burdens of life seemed hard to bear, and the shadows passed for a moment o'er the sun, there were moments when he would give all the honors of the world, all the plaudits of men, for just five minutes to clasp again an old withered form, to hear an old familiar voice, and look into the time-dimmed eyes of mother. Well has the poet said, "the hand that rocks the cradle is the power that rules the world."

And where in God's world will we find the golden sphere of woman so clearly defined as in the works of Shakespeare. It seems to me as if he had ever before his mind's eye that beautiful picture in the golden dawn of creation, when Adam, sleeping amidst the flowers, was awakened by the voice of God, and, starting to his feet, saw before him a beautiful creature, half human, half divine, and as he stood in open-mouthed wonder looking upon her, God took her hand and placed it in his, and said: "Adam, she is a woman, and she will be your helpmate," and from that hour man and wom-

an have gone on through the world, hand in hand, so different, and still so necessary to one another.

Man is strong and bluff, and sometimes rough. Woman is gentle, timid, kind; one an offset for the other. Man is the pioneer; he goes through the world tearing down the mountains of opposition, filling in the plains of difficulty, and with his sturdy stroke brings down the mighty oaks, and builds up the temples of civilization. Woman comes after with her songs of love, and scatters the beautiful flowers, and smiling angels whisper home, sweet home. Man is made up of conceit, selfishness, conscious power. Woman, forgiving, loving, helpful; each for the part he or she is to play in the drama of life.

The story of woman as told in Shakespeare is a story of love. God or man, a woman's life is a woman's love. Shakespeare makes the song of woman a melody of love, rippling with tones of affection. She is never the center of his picture. No; man is always the center of the picture, and woman is like a satellite that revolves forever around her little world, which is man. I do not mean to say that Shakespeare makes woman the inferior of man. O, no. We find

her there as we find her in the world of life—infinitely grander, infinitely superior to man, but not in herself. Woman becomes grand in that God-like elevating influence which she exercises on the God-creature, man.

It does not seem to me that there are many women in Shakespeare. It seems to me it is always the same woman, but in a different position, under different circumstances, fighting against different forces, always a creature of her love. God or man, a woman's love is a woman's life.

Is it a pure innocent maiden standing on that mystic line trembling between maidenhood and womanhood? She loves, and still she scarcely knows the meaning of that word love. She has never dreamed of the mysteries of a mother or a wife. She meets in life her ideal, her prince; she loves him, not realizing the burden of love; and still she will throw away home and friends and gold and the world, and cling, God only knows how she clings, to the man she loves. Is not that Juliet? Sweet and tender Juliet; only an innocent, trembling child who has never learned the mystery of life, yet she lives or dies with the fortunes of her love?

Is it a woman older grown? She has crossed

that mystic line between maidenhood and womanhood; she has met her affinity in life; she has married and settled down to the humdrum life of rearing a family; and all her life, all her world is encompassed in the four walls of the home of the man she loves. And all of a sudden there comes a change, she becomes a woman of the world; she throws open the doors of her home; entertains lavishly; becomes deeply interested in every public affair. There is a chair vacant in the affairs of men, and there is only one man in God's world that can fill that chair—her man—the man she loves. Is not that Lady Macbeth?

Think what you will of woman in the day of sunshine or the hour of glee, but in the hour of pain, and the day of distress, in the moment of pressing needs, grander, stronger than all the men in the world is the heart and soul of one true, loving woman. This is the philosophy of Shakespeare: One bad woman can grasp the soul of a man and drag him down until he stands knocking at the gates of hell. But e'en at the gates of hell, a woman purer than she can grasp the soul of a man and drag him back again until she binds his soul for ever to the great white throne of God.

And nowhere in the literature of the world

will we find this golden sphere of woman so clearly marked out as in Shakespeare. We find it in every play that he has written. Indeed so strongly was this power of woman impressed upon the mind of Shakespeare that it has become the distinguishing mark of his work. Indeed so clearly defined is the power of Shakespeare's woman that she makes his plays what they are, either comedies or tragedies. If the woman be a bad woman, the play is always a tragedy. If the woman of the play be a good woman, it is always a comedy. Hence the philosophy of life: "It is woman that saves or damns the world." This is clearly brought out in A Winter's Tale, where for four acts we are lead to expect a tragedy, but the woman is a good woman—Hermione—and Shakespeare can only make the drama of life end in a burst of sunshine.

Romeo and Juliet has all the marks of a comedy. There is no reason in God's world why these two young, honest, loving people should find life a tragedy. But Juliet forgets the sacred dignity of her womanhood; she disregards the laws of conventionality; she forgets the sacredness of parental authority; she is not, in the strict sense of the word, a good woman; and with all her sweet qualities she

reaps the reward of a woman who falls—tragedy and death.

Measure for Measure cries out for tragedy in every line as the plot progresses, but Isabella, with her pure, angelic soul draws good from all around her, and the play is a comedy.

Desdemona, sweet as an angel, pure as even woman should be; but she forgets the sphere of woman—she seeks man. She steps down to one beneath her; she defiles her father's house with deceit, and because she deceived her father Othello lets the devil of jealousy in: "She deceived her father, she may deceive me," and tragedy is the result.

But, perhaps, nowhere do we find this power of woman so strongly brought forth as in the tragedy of Hamlet. Hamlet is unmanned; he has seen the ghost of his father; it is disclosed to him that his father is murdered; that his uncle is a traitor; that his mother is a dishonored woman. His brain is reeling, his heart is bursting; his soul yearns for a friend, a counsellor; he must have advice; he must confide in some one. In this crisis where does he go? Does he rush back to the university to the learned professors that talk philosophy and theology, as if they knew the mind of Deity? No! he does not even think of them. Where then does he seek advice and consolation, in his soldier friends? He leaves them and flees alone through the night. Flying from men where does Hamlet go? He does what every man does in the crisis of his life, in the hour of need; he seeks the one woman that he loves, whether it be the faithful wife, the loved mother, or the trusted sweetheart.

Ophelia is alone in her chamber; she hears a commotion without; in through the casement Hamlet bursts. His doublet is open; his kerchief

torn loose; his hair flying wildly in the wind. Silently he stands, and gazes upon her as one gone mad. Then rushing across the room he grasps her by the hands; he looks down into her great blue eyes as if he would read her very soul. Not a word is spoken; but it needs no words. In that silent picture every student of human life will hear the soul of Hamlet cry out, "My mother is a dishonored woman; Ophelia, will you be true, will you be true." And Ophelia, poor Ophelia, a mere child, hemmed away from the world, guarded by a suspicious old father, without a mother to rear her into womanhood; she is unformed. She looks up into the eyes of the man whom she loves like a child. She loves him! What does she know of love? She has never dreamed of the mysteries of motherhood, or womanhood. She looks up into the eyes of the distracted Hamlet with a smile of love; but it is the love of a child, of a girl; and Hamlet, seeking the woman, finds only a child as he looks into her great blue eyes. And casting her from him, backward, his eyes still on her, he passes out into the night. "Get thee to a nunnery, get thee to a nunnery, get thee to a nunnery." He realizes that she is not ready to bear the burdens of womanhood, or motherhood, or a wife. He must bear his burdens alone. And

broken-hearted Hamlet goes out into the night. In the crisis of his life, in the hour of his need, the helpmate that God gave him is not ready. Is not this the tragedy of human life? God help the man, when the world turns against him, in the hour of need, rushing home with a breaking heart to find that he has married a wife, but she is not a woman—she is not God's noble helpmate.

Had Ophelia been three years older the tragedy of Hamlet would never have been written. Had Ophelia been three years older she would have been a woman—a woman with all that mysterious strength that comes to a woman in the hour that she loves. Had Ophelia been three years older, when Hamlet rushed in upon her, in the hour of his need, he would have found a woman ready to share his burden. She would have looked up into his eyes with a glance as firm, as fearless as his own, for her heart was pure. She would have grasped his hand with a grasp as firm as his; she would have answered with a fearless heart of a woman, "Yes, Hamlet, I will be true. The sorrows of your life for love's sake I will bear; the burdens of your life for love's sake I will share. Yes, Hamlet, I will be true." With the tender instinct of a woman she would have brushed back the hair from his fevered brow; she would have whispered calm words of solace

into his distracted brain; and, with the better instinct of a woman, she would have pointed heavenward and cried, "God is the avenger," and Hamlet would have been saved.

Indeed to me this is the whole story of Hamlet. Not so much the story of the man as the story of woman. I cannot feel that the play was ever intended as the mere narrative of the woes of the individual Hamlet, but rather as a great allegory on human life—man a puppet, between woman, good and bad. He is what she makes him, a great success or an awful failure. So with Hamlet in the play; he is the product of two women; a good woman, and a bad woman, and the stronger succeeds—the evil queen dominates his life. But had Ophelia been fully matured, had she been a woman in the strict sense of the word, her love would have made her stronger than all the evil queens in God's creation, and the play would be what it should be—a beautiful comedy with love dominating.

I have never been able to sympathize with the question of Hamlet's madness. It seems to me absurd to bring up the question at all. If the play is viewed as an allegory on life all men are mad. "The number of fools is infinite. 'Omnis homo mendeax est.'" If viewed as merely the narrative of Hamlet the individual,

and his trials, it would be absurd to suppose that the greatest author in our language asks intelligent people to sit in front of the footlights, and listen to the vagaries, or gaze at the antics of a madman. What could there be to the intelligent mind, in the ravings of a madman, more than in the antics of a monkey, unless he be a specialist on brain diseases or a student of psychology. The truth is that Hamlet, as presented by Shakespeare, is predisposed to hysterical action. He is by nature moody and melancholy; of a deep poetic, and, at times, philosophical turn of mind. He is inclined to take himself and the world much too seriously; and Shakespeare has carefully prepared us for this view of Hamlet. Hence he brings him home in the first act clad in mourning, wearing a solemn visage, though the court is full of merriment. His answers to his mother are more like the private utterances beside the bier of his father, than the public conversation of a court.

"Seems, madam! nay, it is; I know not 'seems.'
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,

That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play:
But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe."

After his first entrance we can scarcely be surprised at any show of extreme sentiment. However, the key note of Hamlet, and his nature, is best discovered by studying the folk-lore on ghosts and ghost-men.

In England, Scotland and Ireland, where Shakespeare found the traditions on ghosts, we find that once a man sees or speaks to a ghost he is a marked man—he becomes the creature of the message that the ghost conveys. He is never again like his fellow men; at least not until the behest of the ghost is fulfilled. This popular idea is carefully carried out by Shakespeare in the person of Hamlet. Hamlet acts exactly as the popular belief of England, Ireland, and Scotland would have demanded of him after having received a behest from a departed spirit. He must do the unexpected; he must at times be entirely controlled by the supernatural visitant. He is no longer merely Hamlet, the Dane; he is Hamlet, bearing a burden from the dead; dominated by a spirit; living in a dream. And this must continue until he has fulfilled the behest of the spirit, or found peace in the grave.

Had Shakespeare allowed Hamlet to act otherwise than he does he would have outraged every idea of ghost and its effects on human beings as then held, and is still extant in the folk-lore of Ireland and Scotland. However, the great beauty of the piece is not in the psychological study of the individual, but rather in viewing the composition as a whole—a philosophical treatise on human life. It seems to me to express thoroughly Shakespeare's philosophy of life—the question of men and women, and their respective places in determining human happiness.

The Merchant of Venice

However, we may view the respective merits of the various plays of Shakespeare, perhaps none furnishes a more interesting study to the real student of literature than does The Merchant of Venice, or Shylock. Whether we look upon it as a play with some deep hidden meaning, or as a bid for the applause of the vulgar rabble; whether we judge it as a meaningless comedy or a bitter arraignment of the Jew, the play furnishes perplexing questions, which makes its study fascinating and mystifying.

The Merchant of Venice is presented to the student in English literature as the work of a genius. But no sooner does he begin to study it according to rule, to analyze it according to the principles of dramatic composition, than he finds that Shakespeare has violated in this composition almost every known law of dramatic composition. And the inquiring student is forced to join with many more learned and deep critics in the opinion that our mighty genius, Shakespeare, has, in The Merchant of Venice, stooped from the heights of his genius, thrown aside the models of his art, to tickle the ears of the groundlings with fantastic comedy, or cater to

the lowest prejudices of his time and people, sacrificing even the unity of his composition to this ignoble purpose, utterly unmindful of the fact that a dramatic genius can no more throw aside the requirements of dramatic art, to gain applause of his auditors, than could a grammarian write gutter English because his epistles were directed to one of the lower strata.

Who argues that Shakespeare prostituted his art for public applause or public sentiment forgets the law that he himself laid down for the artist: "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone or come tardy off, though it make the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve: the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others."

It seems to me that if we could for a few moments forget the critics of the past, and without bias or prejudice take up the study of The Merchant of Venice strictly as a work of art,

most, if not all, of the difficulties would disappear.

Our critics tell us that The Merchant of Venice, or Shylock, is a comedy. Some go still farther and say that it is a fantastic comedy. It is a point worthy of serious consideration to any student to remember that not a single one of our great English actors, whatever his private opinion may have been, has ever produced The Merchant of Venice with any other idea than that of a fantastic comedy, until in our own day Sir Henry Irving, after many years of careful study, decided that no intelligent actor might produce The Merchant of Venice as a comedy, for the simple reason (and I beg you to notice that he has studied this play just as I want you to study English literature) that Shylock, who is the center of the dramatic picture, does not speak a single comedy line from the opening to the closing of the play. It is evident, then, that Irving would judge the motive of the entire composition from the central figure of the dramatic picture. And indeed if we read the play carefully, and without bias, we will find that Irving speaks the truth.

Shylock is not a comedy character, nor is there any comedy in his lines, nor in his make-up. It is true we laugh at him—at his mannerisms, at

the intonations of his speeches, but never at his lines. His lines are tragic; they reek of blood, they smell of the fumes of the infernal. Indeed the more closely we study the play the more we are convinced that the whole composition is built upon the plan of a tragedy instead of the outlines of comedy. Heinrich Heine dwells particularly upon this point. He says: "The Merchant of Venice is undoubtedly built upon the plan of a tragedy, nevertheless Shakespeare intended it as a comedy."

Now could you think of a more thorough impeachment of the genius of Shakespeare, than this estimate of The Merchant of Venice? To say that Shakespeare, our great genius, tried to write a comedy, but really left us a tragedy, at least in form. Indeed, it is said that when Heinrich Heine first saw the play in England, he could not remain in his chair, but passed back and forth within the precincts of his box. In the fourth act, when Shylock, shuffling off the stage, cries out, "I pray thee, let me go from hence. I am not well," a young English woman, sitting down in one of the stalls, began to weep, and, speaking aloud to her companion, said, "The ould man is grieved, the ould man is grieved." And completely forgetting himself, Heine cried out to the audience, "This is not a comedy, this is a

tragedy." And this statement, forced from Heine in an unguarded moment, has been voiced by many an intelligent reader of Shakespeare, in spite of the fact that he finds himself at variance with most of the accepted critics and commentators.

The whole trouble is that our English critics have been making blunders generation after generation in the estimate of authors and their works, because they have never studied literature as an art. Our English critic has never had before his mind's eye a criterion of art, by which he would judge each literary composition as a single mental impression. He has analyzed it, he has parsed it, he has torn asunder, and in the process of dissection the soul of literature has excaped.

No wonder, then, studying The Merchant of Venice in lines and sentences and speeches, the English critic tells us that it is a patchwork—several stories patched together merely to amuse the rabble. Had our critics studied The Merchant of Venice as a work of art, as it should be studied; had they put Shylock in the center of the picture, and studied each character in its relation to Shylock, they might have discovered in the unity of art, that instead of a patchwork, The Merchant of Venice is a magnificent literary

mosaic, made up, it is true, of several different parts, each story like a beautifully colored stone, so splendidly dove-tailed and hair-lined to its fellow, in order to bring out the central thought that runs like a golden thread through the fabric of the several different stories of the play.

The truth is, studied as a work of art, The Merchant of Venice is neither a comedy nor a tragedy. It is a grand satire on professed christianity without the spirit of Christ. To me the play is a mighty protest against the christian bigots that professed the faith of Christ and then tore out the hearts of their brothers in the name of the Christ that died for all men. To me The Merchant of Venice is a magnificent satire, a stinging protest on the christian bigots who, insead of raising men to the dignity of sons of God, have debased them below the level of brute-life. It is an outcry against the christian society that instead of producing saints has produced that devil, that immoral wretch, that pervert, that monstrosity that stands there in the center of the picture and dominates every line of the play.

At first glance this seems like a startling declaration, and the only way to determine the value of this opinion is to systematically study the work from the standpoint of art. It would be useless

to express any opinion, or try to form any estimate of this work, The Merchant of Venice, or for that matter, of any other work of art, without first determining what was the motif of the author in the building up and the perfecting of the work, for on this rests the whole question of his success or his failure. What was he trying to do? What did he wish to accomplish? If he has accomplished his motif in a credible manner, then his work is a successful work; it has conveyed the idea of the author. Inasmuch as he may have failed to accomplish the object on which he started out, in that much is his work a failure.

Our first step, then, must be to determine what was the object of Shakespeare in the writing of the play The Merchant of Venice. How will we determine this? As there have been so many conflicting systems and haphazard methods of studying literature, perhaps the quickest way to arrive at a true opinion would be to forget that we are studying merely a work of literature, and keep in mind, strictly, that we are studying a work of art.

There is a unity in art that makes all arts one. The musician is enraptured with the harmony of color in the work of a painter; the painter is enthralled with the unity of a work in literature;

the poet finds his soul expressed in the rhythmic beat of a musical composition. Hence if you find difficulty in one of the arts the surest method for its solution is to call in the other arts to aid in clarifying the obscurity. This is exactly what I would ask you to do in studying The Merchant of Venice. We wish to determine what was the object of Shakespeare in the writing of the play. Now, if this were a musical composition instead of a work in literature, what is the first step that a student would take? Any musician will tell you that he first determines what is the motif of the composition, and then according to the development, to the variation; according to the differentiation of the motif or theme does he determine whether or no the composition is a work of art or a meaningless jumble of sounds.

Let us follow this method with The Merchant of Venice. What is the theme or the motif of this composition;—that is, what is the thread that runs continuously from beginning to end, throughout the composition? Some readers of Shakespeare claim that the theme of The Merchant of Venice is the story of Antonio, the merchant. This, indeed, the name suggests, for Antonio is unquestionably the merchant of Venice. But if Shakespeare intended Antonio to be the theme of the composition, the play must end in

the fourth act, for the story of Antonio ends there, and his appearance in the last act has no bearing whatever on the action of the piece. Indeed his presence in the last act seems uncalled for, as Portia and Bassanio dominate the scene. It seems scarcely possible that a great genius would take as his central theme a story ending in vital interest in the fourth act and prop up the last act with a secondary story in order to hold us to the curtain. This is exactly why so many critics call the play a second rate production, and argue that Shakespeare was catering to the crowd instead of the critics, or the learned few.

Other students, finding this difficulty, have avoided it by claiming that while Antonio is an important factor in the play, the real story or theme of the composition is the love story of Portia and Bassanio. But if the love story of Portia and Bassanio is the theme of the play, then The Merchant of Venice is a misnomer. We can scarcely believe that the great genius would start to tell the love story of Portia and Bassanio and then deliberately give it a name that would carry the mind of the reader off the main story. Not only this difficulty, but a greater one presents itself. If the love story of Portia and Bassanio is really the object of the play, why,

then, would Shakespeare, or any other author of experience, introduce a second love story,—that of Jessica and Lorenzo, which for whole scenes o'ershadows the story of Portia and Bassanio? This would seem like working to cross purposes, and striving to ruin the interest in his own drama. I cannot believe that any man who knew the first law of dramatic construction would make such a blunder as to divert the attention of his audience from the main theme.

With these difficulties before their eyes many students—particularly the students of our age—have determined that the play, the real central figure, is Shylock. But if the story of Shylock is the object or the theme of the composition, then, again, The Merchant of Venice is a misnomer, and, again, a greater obstacle—the play must unquestionably end in the fourth act, for Shylock does not even appear in the last act. This would seem to leave us practically without a theme, and indeed as long as we stick to the idea of individuals we will find no theme in The Merchant of Venice.

I said in my introduction to this work that in the study of art we must keep in mind that art presents not the individual, but the type, and it is from the light of this principle that we will find the theme of The Merchant of Venice—not an

individual, but a type. Neither Shylock, nor Antonio, nor Bassanio, nor Portia as individuals, but each and all of them as types form the theme of The Merchant of Venice. You will see clearly what I mean if you will form in your mind's eye a picture of the play.

Shylock and Antonio dominate the stage, and their spirit permeates every line. Around them are grouped the various characters—different groups in the same picture; each group animated and moved by the spirit of the two central figures —Shylock and Antonio. Neither Shylock nor Antonio as individuals form the theme of the play. The real theme developed and differentiated in the movement of the composition is that spirit of bigotry that binds Antonio and Shylock together, and still, forever keeps them apart.

The theme of the play, then, is bigotry—hatred from religion or so-called religion. You will notice that this spirit of bigotry is what makes the unity of the composition. Bigotry it is that makes the relation between Shylock and Antonio; bigotry it is that dominates the love story of Jessica and Lorenzo; bigotry it is that enters into the love story of Portia and Bassanio, and makes Bassanio a raving, rabid Jew-hunter. While Portia, freed from the taint, pleads like

a sister of the Christ for the down-trodden and despised Jew.

That the play is intended as a satire on professed christianity without the spirit of Christ becomes more evident the longer and the more closely we study it as a great word picture. Shylock and Antonio form the center of the mental picture. They dominate the stage from the beginning of the play to the end of the fourth act, and the fifth act is simply added as a seal to the sneer at the followers of Christ, who, all unmindful of the sufferings of the old Jew, receive his daughter joyously into their company.

Neither the story of Shylock nor the story of Antonio as individuals dominated the mind of Shakespeare as he built up the play, but rather the two men as distinct types of the bigot. Antonio is the bud of bigotry, young and unformed in his prejudice. He hates Shylock for no dealings that he has had with him, on account of no injustice suffered at his hand, but, as it were, from an inborn prejudice, simply and solely because he is a Jew. Shylock is the fruit of bigotry, planted in the fertile ground of christian intolerance, grown strong on persecution, nourished by injustice, ripened by oppression and scorn—a hollow, empty fruit full of bitterness and ashes.

Around these two central figures are grouped

the personae of the play. Each and every person is a christian with the exception of Shylock's daughter. And still as we examine the characters we find that each and every one of the professed christians lacks the one spirit which should distinguish a christian—brotherly love, and charity. All save Portia, she alone pleads for the despised Jew, even as she pleads for the friend of her beloved: "What mercy can you show him, Antonio?"

Let us take up the characters one by one and see how they present themselves when stripped of mere lines and judged solely by their action in the play. Take, for instance, Antonio. As we first read over the lines of the play our impression of Antonio is rather pleasant. He is presented as an amiable, good-natured young man; he is a professed christian, a good citizen of a christian state; a generous friend. Indeed he takes particular pains in almost every scene to profess his christianity. Each and every person in the play who mentions him comments upon his virtue until scene by scene our admiration grows, until finally in the fourth act, when for a moment, it seems that the trial is going against him, and the young doctor turns to him asking, "Have you anything to say?" we are scarcely surprised at his angelic demonstration

as lifting his eyes to Heaven he clasps his hands and says with the air of a martyr:

"But little: I am arm'd and well prepared.
Give me your hand, Bassanio: fare you well!
Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you;
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind
Than is her custom: it is still her use
To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,
To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow
An age of poverty; from which lingering penance
Of such misery doth she cut me off.
Commend me to your honourable wife:
Tell her the process of Antonio's end;
Say how I loved you, speak me fair in death;
And, when the tale is told, bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio had not once a love.
Repent but you that you shall lose your friend,
And he repents not that he pays your debt;
And if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
I'll pay it presently with all my heart."

Then the ladies in the audience break into tears and cry out: "Isn't he lovely?" Nor can we blame them for this gushing expression of admiration. They have heard so much during four long acts of the virtues of Antonio, the christian, that now when they find him in imminent danger of death, they expect to see the wings

sprout. But remember this impression is created by the lines, by the beautiful speeches of Antonio, and Antonio's friends. Throw aside the mere lines and judge Antonio solely by the part that he plays in the great dramatic picture of the play, and his character suddenly assumes a guise that we little dreamed of from the mere lines. This young man who says he is a christian, well prepared, and ready to meet his God, is what?

A young man in the prime of life who spit in the face of an old man sixty years and more, who kicked him and called him a dog, and pulled him by the beard, and all for what? For no reason than that he was a Jew. Take Shylock's own words to Antonio's face:

"Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
In the Rialto you have rated me
About my moneys and my usances:
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug;
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
And spit upon by Jewish gaberdine,
And all for use of that which is mine own.
Well then, it now appears you need my help:
Go to, then; you come to me, and you say
'Shylock, we would have moneys': you say so;
You that did void your rheum upon my beard,

And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
Over your threshold: moneys is your suit.
What should I say to you? Should I not say
'Hath a dog money? Is it possible
A cur can lend three thousand ducats?' or
Shall I bend low and in a bondsman's key,
With bated breath and whispering humbleness,
Say this,—
'Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last;
You spurn'd me such a day; another time
You called me dog; and for these courtesies
I'll lend you thus much moneys'?"

It is not, then, the Jewish blood of Shylock that has hardened his heart; it is not his Hebrew religion that makes him the devil that he is; but it is the christian people around him who lack the spirit of Christ—the spirit of brotherly love. Lest there should be any doubt about the cause of Shylock's hate Shakespeare makes it still more obvious in the scene with the jailer when he says:

"He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the

same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villany you teach me, I will execute; and it shall go hard, but I will better the instruction."

Moreover it is significant that while Shylock admits a deep hatred for the christians as christians, his hate never reaches the point of frenzy until he finds that his daughter has fled with Lorenzo.

"The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till now, two thousand ducats in that; and other precious, precious jewels. I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin!"

Take up the next important character in the play, Bassanio. What do we find here? Another professed christian. A man presumably

a little older than Antonio. From his lines one can scarcely help loving him. The genial, big-hearted, loud-spoken fellow. But the more closely we study his position in the picture, his action in the movement of the play, the less respect we have for him. It is Bassanio who brings Antonio and Shylock together, though he knows they hate and despise one another. His object in bringing them together is selfish; he wants to borrow money. There is only one word that would express the character of Bassanio—today we would call him a roue. He has run the gamut of his vices, he has squandered his patrimony, and now if he can find a good, virtuous, christian woman, who has money enough to support two, he is ready to settle down and become a pillar of the church.

He would borrow money that he might go and sue for the hand of Portia, the heiress; and while it is true he protests, nevertheless he permits his dear friend, Antonio, to pledge his very life that the money may be secured. This is the man that raves at the Jew, that calls him beast because the Jew demands his bond; but when, by a mere technicality he gets the better of the Jew he would crush the very life out of him; rejoices that he is deprived of all means of living; of his very faith that he values really more than

life. This is another specimen of the christian that made Shylock what he was.

Take another example, Lorenzo. He too is a christian, much professed. He will not marry Jessica unless she throws aside her Jewish faith, but it is very significant that his christian scruples do not extend to the Jew's money. He accepts that without any qualms of conscience or violence to his professed christianity.

Another splendid example is Launcelot Gobbo, who is so dreadfully shocked at the possibility of a christian marrying a Jew. Professed christianity is made evident in his every speech, still he is the young man who meets his blind father in the roadway and jokes with him, the butt of the jest being the purity of his own mother.

But perhaps the most striking example of satire woven by Shakespeare into this picture of professed christianity without the spirit of Christ is in the daughter of Shylock. In the opening of the play Jessica is a Jew, during the action of the play she becomes a christian—she steps from the synagogue into the christian church. What has caused this change of heart? What remarkable illumination has been going on in the mind of this young girl to lead her from the synagogue into the church of Christ? I have read the play over many times looking for some preparation on

the part of Jessica to change her from a Jew to a christian, and about the only preparation I can find is that she robbed her father,—stole even his marriage ring, a thing sacred in the eyes of every Jew, and peddled it away for a monkey. She runs away with her lover in the darkness of the night, she dressed in boy's clothing, and there is no mention made of when he married her. According to the laws of Venice, then in force, she could not have been married in Venice, and Shakespeare is discreetly silent as to when the ceremony took place. And still the christians receive her in open arms, welcome her into their homes and their families. Not one word is said of the obligation, according to the law of God and the law of the church, of which she is now a member, that she restore the ill-gotten goods, and pay back what she has stolen from her father—it is all right; she has robbed a Jew.

This is to me the whole significance of the last act—the picture of Shylock's daughter received with open arms by the christians who have ruined and degraded her father. The old man is cast out, the daughter that robbed her father and desecrated her father's house is received in and exalted, and smiles, and is joyous though her father is an outcast.

If we need any further marks of the true mean-

ing of the play we need only turn to the casket scene. This scene has always been the mystery of the play. It does not belong to the play when viewed as a comedy. It mars the dramatic action; it destroys the literary unity of the composition. It is, as it were, a little play within a play, and has always been looked upon as one of the blunders of Shakespeare. But the very moment we realize that satire is the theme of the play—satire on the christian society that disregarded the spirit of Christ—at once the casket scene has a connecting link with the rest of the play, and holds a meaning, and significance, and a value in the development of the theme which would justify Shakespeare in retaining it in the composition.

"I may neither choose whom I would, nor refuse whom I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?" . . .

"Your father was ever virtuous; and holy men, at their death, have good inspirations; therefore, the lottery, that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver, and lead,—whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you,—will, no doubt, never be chosen by any rightly, but one who shall rightly love. But what warmth is

there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?"

In the casket scene we have a dutiful daughter bound by the superstitious mandate of a dead father. The great crucial question of her life must be decided, not by her own judgment, or the common sense of her superiors, but by the binding chance of a choice of caskets. And she, poor child, bound in an almost superstitious awe of the dead father's wish is ready to submit to the ordeal. This gives Shakespeare an opportunity to present before his audience a representative of each civilized nation, and when the representative has presented himself, and sued for the hand of Portia, what is her estimate of these christian gentlemen:

"Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse; and he makes it a great appropriation to his own good parts, that he can shoe him himself. I am much afeard my lady his mother played false with a smith." . . . . . "He doth nothing but frown; as who should say, 'if you will not have me, choose': he hears merry tales and smiles not: I fear he will prove the weeping philosopher when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly sadness in his youth. I had rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in his mouth than to

either of these. God defend me from these two!" . . . "God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man. In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker: but, he!—why, he hath a horse better than the Neapolitan's; a better bad habit of frowning than the Count Palatine: he is every man in no man; if a throstle sing, he falls straight a-capering: he will fence with his own shadow: if I should marry him, I should marry twenty husbands. If he would despise me, I would forgive him, for if he love me to madness, I shall never requite him." . . . "You know I say nothing to him; for he understands not me, nor I him: He hath neither Latin, French nor Italian; and you will come into court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a proper man's picture; but, alas, who can converse with a dumb-show? How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour everywhere." . . .

"That he hath a neighborly charity in him; for he borrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman, and swore he would pay him again when he was able. I think the Frenchman became his surety, and sealed under for another." . . .

"Very vilely in the morning, when he is so-

ber; and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk: when he is best, he is a little worse than a man; and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast: and the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift to go without him."

. . .

"Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee, set a deep glass of English wine on the contrary casket; for, if the devil be within and that temptation without, I know he will choose it. I will do anything, Nerissa, ere I'll be married to a sponge."

"If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable; for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence; and I pray God grant them a fair departure."

This is surely a strong picture which Shakespeare presents before us. Shylock and Antonio stand in the center and around them grouped the personae of the play, all christians. The atmosphere from the first to the closing line is distinctly christian, and still we find not a single person in the play possessed of the spirit of christianity—charity, with the exception of Portia. She, indeed, is not a perfect christian, but

in her simple way exemplifies the spirit of charity.

Shakespeare was too great a genius to leave the entire picture lacking that spirit of Christ. Such an arrangement of characters would be inexplicable viewed in any other light than as a sneer at professed instead of practical christianity. Moreover, the very lines of the composition seem to favor my view of the piece rather than the accepted idea of comedy.

If Shakespeare intended the play for a comedy, then Shylock would naturally be presented as a type of the Jew to be laughed at, and sneered upon, whilst as a fact he has presented a character in Shylock which, despite its moral *monstrousness,* compels our admiration and, at times, wonder. Take for instance the Rialto scene. Read carefully the lines and you will see that the Shylock presented is not a weak fool to be laughed at, but a most shrewd and far-seeing business man, in touch with every movement in the world of commerce:

"Ten thousand ducats for three months—three months from twelve—and then the rate." Carefully he calculates the risk of the loan, and the possible loss from short time placing. He knows each venture of Antonio in the business world, he estimates the chances of venture by sea, he

calculates the significance of each vessel and port of destination. In every way keen, intelligent, and quick-witted. In the age of slow communication—no telegraphs, no shipping reports, no mail system—it is simply marvelous the grasp he has of affairs. He sneers at the ventures of Antonio, and his judgment in later events is verified. Doubtful of Antonio's safety he throws away business, and craftily seeks to entangle the christian in an obligation to the Jew. To induce his enemy to accept favor at his hands, he angers Antonio, and when his judgment is weakest from passion presents his plea of friendship. The old Jew plays with the educated, intelligent christian merchant. If there be a laugh in this scene it is on the christian entrapped by the superior craftiness of the Hebrew.

But the most convincing argument against the accepted theory of comedy is in the fact that close study of Shylock convinces us that no author, who pretended any knowledge of the Hebrew race, would build up such a character as Shylock as a typical Jew. It is true he is born of a Jewish mother, Hebrew blood flows in his veins, he swears by the faith of Abraham, but he utterly lacks the national characteristics of his race. As a miser Shylock might indeed stand for an individual Jew, but as the individual he would be

false to his blood. "Art presents for our consideration, not the individual, but the type, the species, the genus."

When a true artist wishes to create a character he studies not a single person. He would reproduce not a mimic, a counterpart of one man, for such a character would be intelligible only to such as would know, or had met the individual. The true artist studies the whole class, or nation, or species from which he would take his character. He notes not the peculiarities of individuals, but the common traits, the national characteristics, the universal tendencies, and incorporates as much or as many of these general traits into one person; he builds up the character that must live and be intelligible to all times because it is typical.

So with Shakespeare. If he intended Shylock to stand for the Jewish people we must find in the character as presented the accepted traits, the national characteristics of the Hebrew people. Now, do we find these in Shylock?

Let us take up just three of the most noted and commonly accepted characteristics of the Jew.

1st. He is essentially a commercial man. Barter is to him a pleasure, not a burden. He will buy and he will sell. If there be one chance in a hundred in a business deal the Jew will take

that chance, and strangest of all he will come out benefited. He will buy anything you have to sell, and he will sell it back to you at a profit. They have dominated the commerce of the world. Most of the so-called religious persecutions of the Jew were, and are really the christian plodder's frantic effort to wreck the chariot of Jewish commercial craft to save himself from being crushed under its rushing wheels.

We see none of these in Shylock. He will not buy, he will not sell. He laughs at the chances of trade; he is a miser. He holds the dollars in his hands, and he will make one dollar breed another.

2nd. The hospitality of the Hebrew is proverbial. A Jew will share his last dollar with a brother Jew. His home life is, perhaps, the most perfect of any nation. A Jew will never turn away a fellow Jew in need. If he has but one meal he will take his fellow Jew in. If you doubt this take experience as the proof. Have you ever seen a Jew beggar, unless in the days of actual persecution? I can safely say no, never. You may open your door any morning and find a Christian—Catholic, Methodist, Baptist—beggar for a meal, but never a Jew, and why? Because the Jew is hospitable; the Jew home is an open house to his kind. Hospitality is the tradi-

tion of the race. Abraham entertained angels unawares; they were strangers in the city, and he took them in and found them the messengers of God. This tradition is handed down from father to son, and so no Jew needs seek help from the "unclean" gentile.

3rd. The crowning glory of the Jew is his pride of blood: "We are the people of God; we are the elect of nations. In our veins flows the blood of Abraham, of David, of Solomon, and of Christ." A Jew without the pride of blood, without the arrogance of his nation would be but the caricature of a man, lacking the very love of living.

Do you see any of these characteristics in Shylock? With all his hatred of the christians, with all his frenzy at the flight of his daughter, his ducats, and his jewels are the subject of his lamentations. He values his gold, and his gems more than the desecrated blood of a Jewish virgin. "I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin! . . . I know not what's spent in the search: why, thou loss upon loss! The thief gone with so much, and so much to find the thief." He would have the jewels even in the dead girl's ears. He would grasp the ducats even from her coffin. Why,

this would be blasphemy to the mind of a Jew. "Unclean is the gold, and cursed is the jewels in a dead woman's hands." Why, this man is no Jew; he lacks every national characteristic of the Hebrew people, and any true Jew would shrink from him with horror. He is not the product of Hebrew blood, not a child of Jewish faith. He is the product of the tainted atmosphere he breathes of the false christian world that lacks the spirit of Christ.

If this talk could do you no more good I would beg of you to read over once more The Merchant of Venice, not as a comedy, but as a great satire. Put Shylock in the center of the picture, study each character in relation to the center, and the characters will take on a covering never dreamed of before, the lines will flow with a new meaning; instead of a second rate play, instead of a mere bid to the vulgar rabble you will find in The Merchant of Venice the masterpiece of Shakespeare—the one work in the English language where the author has carefully differentiated between the spoken lines and the action of the individual in the play. To me it is the greatest satire in the language or literature of the world.

. . . . . .

Any student who will take up this method of

studying the works of literature as word pictures, as a single mental impression, worked out in dialogue, and seek the central, dominating thought, not only The Merchant of Venice, but most of the plays of Shakespeare will take on a new charm and a deeper significance.

For example, King Lear is persistently presented and spoken of as the tragedy of ingratitude, and still viewed as a picture the ingratitude of Lear's daughters is only a detail in the great composition. Lear himself dominates the play completely to the exclusion of everybody and everything else. Place him in the center of the picture, grouping his daughters and the other characters of the play around him, and we find that Lear has made the tragedy just what it is. Lear himself first shows ingratitude when he banishes Kent, thus giving the example of ingratitude to his daughters. It is Lear who first shows cruelty and vindictiveness in his treatment of Cordelia. It is Lear who from the very opening lines of the play, and afterwards in his conduct of himself and his men, who shows the self-willed tyrant, who has never learned the lesson of considering others. From this central figure of the picture we find these various vices reflected in his children, and the tragedy is really the tragedy of "The sins of the father visited unto the third and fourth generation." From out of his loins his vices hath gone forth, and live again in his offspring. Even the savage love of

Lear is reproduced in Cordelia. Stubbornly she refuses to boast of a love that is really the consuming passion of her life. She would not bend even in her love to curb the anger of a father king. She is truly and pre-eminently the daughter of Lear, as indeed are Goneril and Regan, but in a lesser degree. Goneril, the older daughter, by her headstrong determination to rule in her own house, and Regan by her cold and heartless cruelty of her father. It is to enunciate this that Shakespeare drags in the story of The Earl of Gloucester, who finds, like Lear, that the sins of his youth find him in his old age, and the offspring of his vices begotten in joy is like the sins that begot it, perfidious and selfish.

Macbeth

Again, in Macbeth, we are constantly studying the tragedy of ambition, while as a fact Julius Caesar is the tragedy of ambition. It is not ambition that starts moving or makes possible the tragedy of Macbeth. Macbeth, like every other man in his position, has always had hopes and longings and ambitions, but it is only when superstition enters into his life, when the witches send forth their prophecy, that Macbeth and his lady, fired with superstition, feel themselves strong enough to cope with the genius of the king:

"Two truths are told,
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of imperial theme.—I thank you, gentlemen.—
This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill; cannot be good; if ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor:
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings:

My thought, whose murder yet is but fanatical,
Shakes so my single state of man that function
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
But what is not."

Had Macbeth turned a deaf ear and a smile of scorn upon the witches and their prophecy, the awful tragedy would never have transpired. Macbeth, then, is really the tragedy of superstition. That as Banquo says:

"That, trusted home,
Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,
Besides the thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange:
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us.

. . . . . .

It is true I love Shakespeare, perhaps more than any other great author, but not alone for his splendid lines, not because of his matchless verse—I love him because, to me, he is the one author who understands the human soul. He is the one author who carries out the true philosophy of human life in the drawing of his characters.

I can remember myself as a young man in the world, and I thought I knew men, and in my inexperience believed they were bad just be-

cause they wanted to be bad. I can remember the day when, in my simplicity, I believed that thousands of women were grabbed by the arms of hell, and dragged down into that maelstrom of vice in our land, out of very viciousness of spirit. But I have grown older since then; I know the world far better today: I have been a priest and a doctor of souls long enough to be able to say to you tonight that in all this wicked world I do not believe there is any man or any woman who is all bad. I care not how deep he has sunken into crime; I care not how far she may have wandered away from the law, God knows that at some hour in each sinner's life he stands down there in the valley of sin and looks up at the mountain of God's righteousness, and yearns, God only knows how that sinner is yearning, to get back to the life that seems lost forever.

O! how truly Shakespeare brings this out in his plays. No man in our language has painted more deep-dyed villains than has Shakespeare. He has spared nothing to make his sinners devils in human guise, and still, perhaps with the single exception of Iago, there is not a villain in Shakespeare that at some hour in his life his bosom is not thrown open, and you see a soul quivering under the eyes of God.

Take for example Macbeth. He has murdered the king; he has grasped the crown, and still in the midst of lights and flowers and music, and women in festive attire, he sees the ghost—the shadow of his conscience. See! Lady Macbeth, she seeks her couch after the turmoil of the day, and all night long acts over the scene of the murder.

Look at the king in Hamlet. He has murdered his brother; he has married his brother's wife; he has grasped the crown; even now he is plotting the murder of the young Hamlet; and still at midnight hour, when the world has left him and his courtiers are gone—and he enters his own room, casts aside his kingly garments—he is a man, alone with the Eternal God. How he trembles like a coward, and, like a child down on his knees, he wants to pray; the murderer wants to pray:

"But O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder?'
That cannot be, since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
. . . What then? What rests?
Try what repentance can: what can it not?
Yet what can it when one can not repent?

O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
O limed soul, that struggling to be free
Art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay!
Bow, stubborn knees, and, heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!
All may be well."

A sea of blood rolls between his guilty soul and the merciful eyes of God.

See Richard III, that devil in human form. He has sailed his craft of state on a sea of blood up to the English throne. Men, women and children have been thoughtlessly cast aside that he might sit upon the English throne, and still on the last night of his life, when alone in his tent, he throws himself on his couch and tries to sleep. See how Shakespeare makes him moan and groan and cry out in his sleep the names of the murdered dead: "Mercy, Clarence, mercy," until, springing from his couch in a very fever of fear, he cries out:

"Shadows tonight
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard,
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
Armed in proof, and led by shallow Richmond."

What is all this? Can't you see it is the conscience? It is the soul of man made to the image and likeness of the Eternal God. You may cover it over with the dirt of sin; it may be covered with the cobweb of damnation; you may sear it and mark it, but underneath it all lives the image of God. It is like the coal smoldering down there under the ashes when you think the fire is all burnt out—it only needs a christian hand to brush away the ashes of sin—one breath of God's divine love and it flares up again into a living fire, the image of the great Creator.

This is the genius of Shakespeare. This is the immortal spirit that will not die. It is not his splendid lines; it is not his matchless verse, for Shakespeare has been translated into every language on the continent, and he lives immortal in each and all, because language was not his power, words were not his genius.

Indeed, I think our English reader seldom makes a greater mistake than when he calls Shakespeare *the* great poet. He is not *the* great poet. It is true Shakespeare is a great poet, but he is not *the* poet par excellence. Poetry is essentially creative. Poetry lives in the realms of the imagination. Poetry *does* depend upon words, and music, and measure, and rhyme. Poetry *may* instead of *does*. As a poet Shakes-

peare would not compare with either Schiller or Goethe. He has left us no purely poetic work that would compare with Faust, and no man who understands the genius of poetry will mention the name of Shakespeare in the same sentence with that of the immortal Dante. The best poetic work of Shakespeare is really in his comedies, and perhaps for this reason has been least appreciated by the English public.

But though I am not willing to grant him the title of the poet par excellence, to me he is perhaps more. He is the interpreter of God's great book of nature. He is the portrait painter of the human soul—every heart's desire, every soul's ambition, every mighty ideal from the cradle to the grave.

. . . . . .

I would not have you believe that I do not advocate or admire the close study and analysis of a work of literature. Indeed, I question if any man more highly prizes the value of analysis or the intellectual pleasure to be derived therefrom, but I firmly hold that such study belongs to the advanced student, and not to the beginner; to the matured thinker, and not to the student groping in the dark. Let the student first see the beauty of the work as a whole. Let him become familiar with the style and when he

knows its beauties, when he understands something of the material he will instinctively yearn to study deeper, and learn every detail of the thing which he loves.

Were a child to gain its knowledge of flowers merely from the analysis of the class in botany we would have few lovers of nature and her beauties. So in the garden of literature. Let the young minds first see the flowers blooming gloriously in the sunshine; let them drink in the fragrance, let them view the coloring, let them thrill with the delicate shades, and forms, and then, with love and reverence, pluck the flower from its stem, and sitting down with microscope and lens seek the mysteries of its being. And nowhere will they find more pleasure in this analysis than in the beautiful flowers of Shakespeare.

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Kipling says that the works of great men are windows through which we may look down into their souls. If this be true, and I know it is, think of the possibilities for you and me to take up once more our volumes of Shakespeare—great Gothic windows through which we may look down into the soul of the *greatest author* that ever lived—and you will find him there today, as in the years gone by, writing not mere plays to while away the hours, not mere poems to sat-

isfy a vulgar rabble, but to give to the world some of the greatest sermons ever conceived by a human mind or executed by a merely human hand. You will find what I have found, and thousands of other beauties in these hidden sermons in Shakespeare.

A Word on Tolstoy

If my estimate of Shakespeare and his works and motives needs support, I could scarcely find a stronger confirmation than has been afforded in the widely discussed, and much marvelled at essay on Shakespeare by Count Leo Tolstoy.

He has set himself up as the iconoclast of the theories of commentators on Shakespeare. He tears into shreds the traditions of generations; he scoffs at what he calls quasi-hypnotism of the admirers of the Bard of Avon. He declares Shakespeare gross, unnatural, false, insincere, and lacking in ideals; (ideals as Tolstoy understands ideals) and why? Because Tolstoy has sought for realism in Shakespeare, and does not find it. He seeks a photograph of life and finds an ideal picture, which Tolstoy can never understand.

Shakespeare is not a photographer of the mere material forms of life as they passed before him. Shakespeare paints souls. He moves the lips that hearts may speak. Tolstoy says Shakespeare exaggerates, and this is because he (Tolstoy) does not understand that it is the soul that Shakespeare presents, and not the

mere materialized person, who, in life, masks his soul with his face of clay.

Tolstoy wants realism. He would give us the face of clay at any cost, even though it hides the living, pulsing heart beneath. Shakespeare, yearning for truth, would distort the face in order that we may see the cringing soul beneath.

Tolstoy would convict our Master of falseness, and unchristian faith, because he deifies action as opposed to inaction; (which in spite of Tolstoy's objection, is very good philosophy) because he finds himself compelled to distinguish between the abstract christian love, and love as existed in the hearts of so-called christian people.

Tolstoy is, and has ever been, an extremist. He is never satisfied with striving for ideals. He wants every principle, and every ideal realized in the concrete. When Tolstoy is not a dreamer, he is a materialist. He can never conceive an ideal as ideal or abstract. He wants it materialized. He can never fully understand that the ideal, whilst indeed merely possible of realization, would cease to be an ideal when grasped, and moulded into material form. The christian ideal is super-

natural, and therefore unobtainable by natural effort. Shakespeare knew this, and made his people strive after, but seldom reach, their ideals.

Tolstoy cannot appreciate this viewpoint. He cannot grasp the value or beauty of an abstract, or love merely the ideal.

No wonder, then, that he is disappointed in Shakespeare, who does exaggerate, who does distort the natural picture in order to bring more clearly before us the minds, the souls, the hearts of the people, that through the material picture we may see the intellectual vision,—the true picture of life.

Tolstoy's declaration enunciates exactly what I have been claiming throughout my lectures on Shakespeare, that if we judge the Great Master solely from the standpoint of technique he will fall below the measure of the mediocre. Tolstoy's objections and criticisms deal entirely with the material form—the word, the expression, because, like thousands of other readers, he has been so busy with the material structure that he has failed to catch the soul.

Tolstoy, from his viewpoint, is right in his estimate of Shakespeare, but his viewpoint is wrong. If art is a child of the animal-man; if

art is merely a material copy, then indeed has Tolstoy struck the chord of truth in his criticism. But if art is a child of the God-man; if art is purely, or even quasi-intellectual, then is Shakespeare the master, and the work is true.

It is simply a matter of viewpoint, Tolstoy standing at one extreme, and "Sermons from Shakespeare" at the other.

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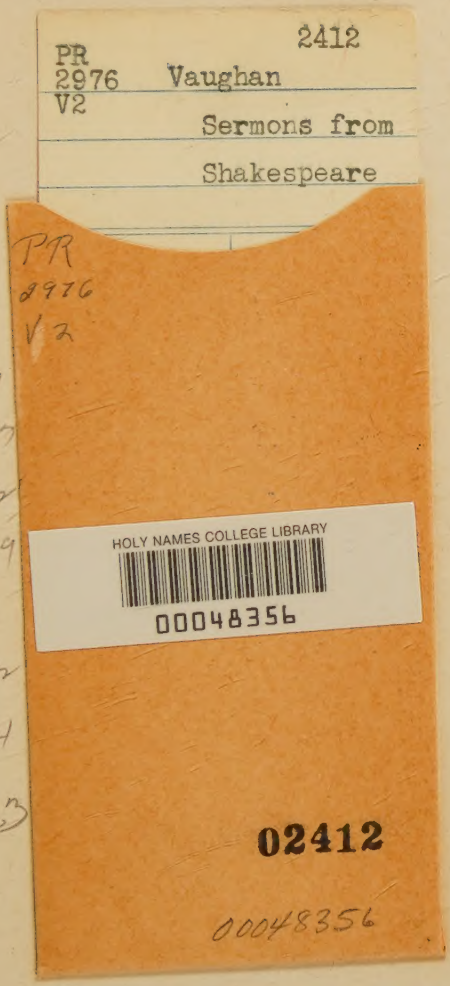
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